

Leo von Scheben
Commissioner
P.O. Box 112500
Juneau, AK 99811-2500
www.dot.alaska.gov



Roger Wetherell
Chief Comm. Officer
907.465.8994
cell: 907.723.1169
roger.wetherell@alaska.gov

Press Release

FOR RELEASE IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 23, 2009

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
No. 09-2541

DOT&PF unveils Alaska's aviation economic assessment

(JUNEAU, Alaska) - The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has completed an aviation economic assessment as part of the Alaska Aviation System (AASP) planning effort – “The Economic Contribution of the Aviation Industry to Alaska's Economy.”

Christine Klein, DOT&PF's Deputy Commissioner of Aviation, will be available to discuss the report Wednesday, at 11 a.m. during a press availability opportunity in the DOT&PF headquarters conference room located at 3132 Channel Drive here.

The economic assessment report, prepared by Northern Economics Inc., found that airports and aviation generate \$3.5 billion in economic benefits, about 8 percent of Alaska's total \$44 billion economy.

“Aviation is responsible for about 10 percent of all jobs in Alaska, totaling 47,000 employment positions,” said DOT&PF Commissioner Leo von Scheben.

Pat Burden of Northern Economics says the findings demonstrate how important aviation is to the Alaska economy.

“If the aviation industry was a primary economic sector, it would be the fifth largest provider of income and jobs in Alaska, larger than the trade, construction and manufacturing, health and education, and hospitality and leisure sectors of the economy,” said Burden.

The report also compares Alaska's dependence on aviation with similar rural communities in the Lower 48 states. Residents of Alaska's rural communities fly about eight times more than their Lower 48 counterparts and receive 39 times more freight by air.

According to one rural Alaska resident recently surveyed, “If we didn't have the airport we wouldn't have anything. The airport is a fact of life for living out here in the villages. The airport is our roads, highway, ocean - our lifeline.”

Deputy Commissioner Klein said the economic assessment solidifies previous perceptions about aviation in Alaska—it's a critical service.

-more-

AVIATION ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT 2/2/2/2

“There are more than 160 communities in Alaska that rely solely on air service,” Klein explained. “That means no roads or ferries to help them get goods and services from outside. Due to Alaska’s remoteness, even urban areas are heavily reliant on air travel and definitely are affected by the economic benefits it brings.”

The economic assessment was completed as a component of the AASP – a broader plan addressing aviation in Alaska.

The AASP sets the vision for aviation by documenting the existing aviation network, identifying airport improvements needs, setting funding priorities, and proposing aviation policy, Klein said.

Work on the AASP has been ongoing since last year to assess needs, identify issues, and make improvements through outreach with the aviation community and customers.

Klein said it is important that the general public become involved in the AASP.

“Our website, www.AlaskaASP.com , provides more information about the AASP and includes a simple online survey that I encourage Alaskans who care about aviation to take,” said Klein. “The public can make their opinions known and help shape the future of aviation throughout Alaska.”

The AASP is being completed in phases from 2008 through 2013 using grants from the Federal Aviation Administration with matching funds from the State of Alaska. The initial phases, of which the economic assessment was a part, cost about \$1 million. The project, being managed by Rebecca Cronkhite of the DOT&PF, is being prepared by DOWL HKM in association with WHPacific, HNTB, Northern Economics, Northern Horizon Company and Planning Technology, Inc.

####

For more information please contact Roger Wetherell at (907) 465-8994, or by email to roger.wetherell@alaska.gov